

Learning-Focused Dialogue Tools & Strategies

ATTENDING FULLY

Physical Alignment

- Match posture, gestures, breathing (depth, duration, rate)

Apply Vocal Alignment

- Match intonation patterns (volume, inflection), pace of language, word choice

Listen to Understand

- Listen without interruption
- Listen non-judgmentally without personal refrencing, personal curiosity, personal certainty
- Listen for assumption, inferences, problem frame, perceptions, perspectives

PAUSING

Allow time for thinking, elaborating and to frame your own thoughts and responses.

Three critical pausing occasions include:

- After asking a question
- After receiving an question
- While you are framing your own language (between the paraphrase and the next question)

PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is a listening skill and indicates your desire to understand. As you listen, you must sort for emotions, content and context and try to find the “story beneath the story”. Three categories of paraphrasing include:

- Acknowledge/Clarify – “I hear/understand what you’re saying”
- Summarize/Organize – Use if multiple thoughts or conversations are going.
- Shift in Level of Abstraction (shifting up/shifting down) – Use to move conversation to the next level by either opening it up more, or prompting for more specifics and precision.

MEDIATING QUESTIONS

Two categories of questions can facilitate thinking.

- Inquiry – These questions broaden and expand thinking. They are open-ended and signal the expectation of multiple responses.
- Probing – These questions focus thinking and are intentionally designed to produce greater precision in thinking.